

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00886 210511Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /062 W
-----063363 210535Z /21

R 210440Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO CINCPAC
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9505
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0886

CINCPAC FOR POLAD AND IPAC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, ELTN, LA, CH
SUBJECT: CHINESE ROAD BUILDING IN NORTHERN LAOS

REF: CINCPAC 170111Z AUG 78 (NOTAL)

1. WE, TOO, HAVE HAD DIFFICULTY IN RECONCILING SOME OF THE DETAILS OF OUR SOURCE'S REPORT WITH OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION. AS A RESULT OF YOUR TELEGRAM, WE CHECKED BACK WITH HIM AND RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL COMMENTS.

2. HE DID NOT KNOW THE NUMBER OF CHINESE INVOLVED IN THE ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM, NOR DID HE KNOW WHETHER THEY WERE CIVILIAN OR MILITARY. THE ONES THAT HE SAW WERE NOT IN UNIFORM. LAST FEBRUARY, CHINESE AMBASSADOR HSU HUANG TOLD US THAT THERE WERE ABOUT 500 CHINESE AID WORKERS IN NORTHERN LAOS, BUT HE DID NOT GIVE US A BREAKKDOWN AS TO THE NUMBERS INVOLVED IN ROAD BUILDING AND IN OTHER
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PROJECTS (VIENTIANE 260).

3. NO UNITS OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS WERE KNOWN.

4. THE NEW BRIDGE LOCATION AS GIVEN IN THE REFTTEL IS WRONG. OUR SUURCE SAID HE MEANT TO SAY THAT THE NEW

BRIDGE WOULD BE UPSTREAM FROM THE MOUTH OF THE NAM KHAN, NOT UPSTREAM FROM THE EXISTING BAILEY BRIDGE. HE GAVE THE LOCATION AS ABOUT 50 METERS FROM THE JUNCTION OF THE NAM KHAN AND THE MEKONG AT APPROXIMATELY TH015024. WHEN WE REMARKED THAT THIS WOULD BRING THE NEW ROAD INTO LUANG PRABANG'S OLDEST AND MOST PICTURESQUE QUARTER, HE AGREED AND SAID THAT A TEMPLE WOULD HAVE TO BE TORN DOWN TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE BRIDGE APPROACHES.

5. LAO WORKERS ARE DEFINITELY INVOLVED IN THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS. IN FACT, THEY ARE BY FAR THE MAJORITY OF THE WORKERS. THE CHINESE ONLY FILL TECHNICAL AND SUPERVISORY POSITIONS. OUR SOURCE SAID THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY VIETNAMESE INVOLVEMENT. IN FACT, HIS ESCORTS SAID THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT WAS BEING VERY DISCREET ABOUT THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE CHINESE ROAD BUILDING PROGRAM SINCE THE LPDR DID NOT WANT TO DISTURB THE DELICATE BALANCE IN SINO-LAO-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS.

6. WE HAVE NO WAY OF CONFIRMING ANY OF THE ABOVE, BUT WE PASS IT ON IN THE HOPE IT MAY BE OF USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER AVAILABLE DATA.
ROBERTS

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NNN

Message Attributes

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